



**CIPD**

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EXECUTIVE REPORT | *June 2022*

# CIPD Good Work Index 2022

UK Working Lives Survey

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 160,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

## Executive report

# CIPD Good Work Index 2022

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## Acknowledgements

This report was written by Mel Norris-Green, CIPD, and is based on the CIPD Good Work Index survey report, written by Daniel Wheatley of the University of Birmingham.

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## Publication information

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# 1 Introduction

After a couple of challenging years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations and workers alike are adjusting to new ways of working, and to the lasting impact of the pandemic on health and wellbeing.

Although in the UK COVID-19 restrictions have largely been removed, the impact of the pandemic is being felt, from increased absence levels to navigating new ways of working. New challenges are also emerging, like the cost-of-living crisis, where employers have a real responsibility to support their staff.

Work can, and should, be a force for good. However, we know that there is work to be done in the UK to make good work accessible for everyone. While much of the focus through the pandemic was focused on keeping people in work, there is a strong case to look at the quality of jobs too.

At the CIPD, we believe that good work:

- is fairly rewarded and gives people the means to securely make a living
- allows for work-life balance
- gives opportunities to develop, and ideally a sense of fulfilment
- provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships
- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is physically and mentally healthy for people.

Importantly, good work should be accessible for all, regardless of job type or someone's background. It may not be realistic to make all jobs great in all ways, but employers should ensure that they are thinking creatively about how they can improve job quality with job design and HR practices. Read more about our viewpoint on job quality [here](#).

The seven dimensions of job quality (see 'About the CIPD Good Work Index' box below) cover important subjective and objective aspects of work. Despite changes in the world of work, the fundamentals of good work remain constant. People professionals need to work to get the basics right as well as tackle emerging issues that shift how or where work is done.

The CIPD Good Work Index 2021 found that employee experiences at work remained relatively stable compared with pre-pandemic, although there were notable exceptions, and it was clear that the pandemic exacerbated existing inequality.

Job security, especially for workers on furlough, was a real concern. Wellbeing and work-life balance were also impacted, among other things.

The CIPD Good Work Index 2022 finds that many of these issues persist. In this report, we share insights from over 6,000 UK workers' responses, and provide recommendations from practice on key issues like:

- the 'great resignation', or the 'great rethink', and employee retention
- work-life balance
- wellbeing
- supporting line management capability
- employee career development.

We find that while the 'great resignation', or 'great rethink', has been overstated, organisations that are concerned with retention should look to improve job quality, a key factor in workers' intention to leave their roles.



### About the CIPD Good Work Index

The CIPD Good Work Index (now in its fifth year) is an annual benchmark of good work, or job quality, in the UK. Our latest report provides insight into the working lives of UK workers across the following seven dimensions:

- pay and benefits
- employment contracts
- work-life balance
- job design and the nature of work
- relationships at work
- employee voice
- health and wellbeing.

The data in this summary report comes from the CIPD/YouGov *UK Working Lives* survey. This report is based on data from 6,262 UK workers, collected between 19 January and 28 February 2022. The figures are weighted and representative of UK working adults. We also refer to longitudinal data from previous years of the CIPD Good Work Index.

You can find further information about the CIPD Good Work Index below:

- The [CIPD Good Work Index 2022 survey report](#), written by Daniel Wheatley at the University of Birmingham, explores the data in more detail, along with full methodology/appendices.
- Our archive of [CIPD Good Work Index](#) reports since 2018 includes data from previous years and details on how the survey was developed (please note, as the report was formerly known as UK Working Lives, the 2018 and 2019 report titles reflect this).
- The CIPD reports [Understanding and Measuring Job Quality](#) and [The Road to Good Work](#) informed the development of the Good Work Index.

### About the figures in this report

Some percentage figures may be rounded, so totals may not add to exactly 100%.

When we report mean scores (a figure expressed as 0.x), this refers to the mean average response a participant has given across a range of survey questions. The mean score ranges from 0 to 1, and a higher score tends to relate to more positive responses.

We refer to occupation throughout this report, which can be measured in a number of ways. We use the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) and the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) in this report.

We also use the terms 'employee' and 'worker' throughout this report. We use these as descriptors, rather than to differentiate employees and workers in the legal sense.

## 2 The great rethink

There's been plenty of media coverage about the 'great resignation', or the 'great rethink'. This mainly relates to the larger than usual volume of employees moving jobs, driven by workers' changing attitudes and expectations of work.

Employers may be increasingly concerned about this, given an already tight labour market, where close to half of employers say they are facing recruitment difficulties ([according to the spring 2022 CIPD Labour Market Outlook](#)).

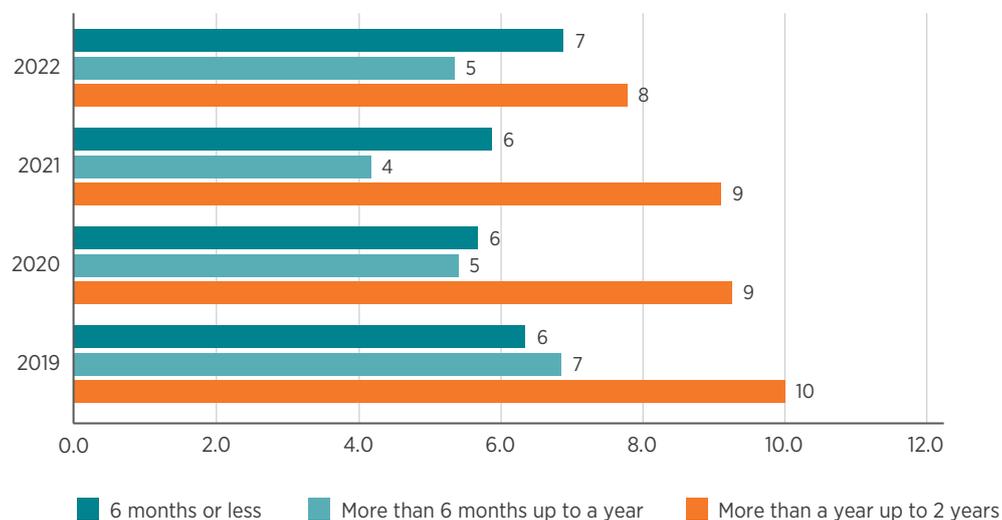
[Previous CIPD analysis](#) of the Labour Force Survey finds that the great resignation and the 'great rethink' have been overstated, with little evidence to suggest workers' attitudes and preferences have changed, and that increase in job movement is largely a delay in job moves. We explore the employee view on this below.

While we find little evidence of a 'great resignation', employers should be aware that workers are increasingly likely to feel they could get a comparable job elsewhere, making a focus on retention as important as ever.

### Job mobility

In line with previous CIPD analysis, 7% of our 2022 sample have moved jobs in the past six months, compared with 6% in previous years. Five per cent have moved jobs in the last six to twelve months. These figures were higher than in 2021, but similar to 2020<sup>1</sup> and 2019 levels.

Figure 1: Job moves between 2019 and 2022 (%)



Base: n=6,269.

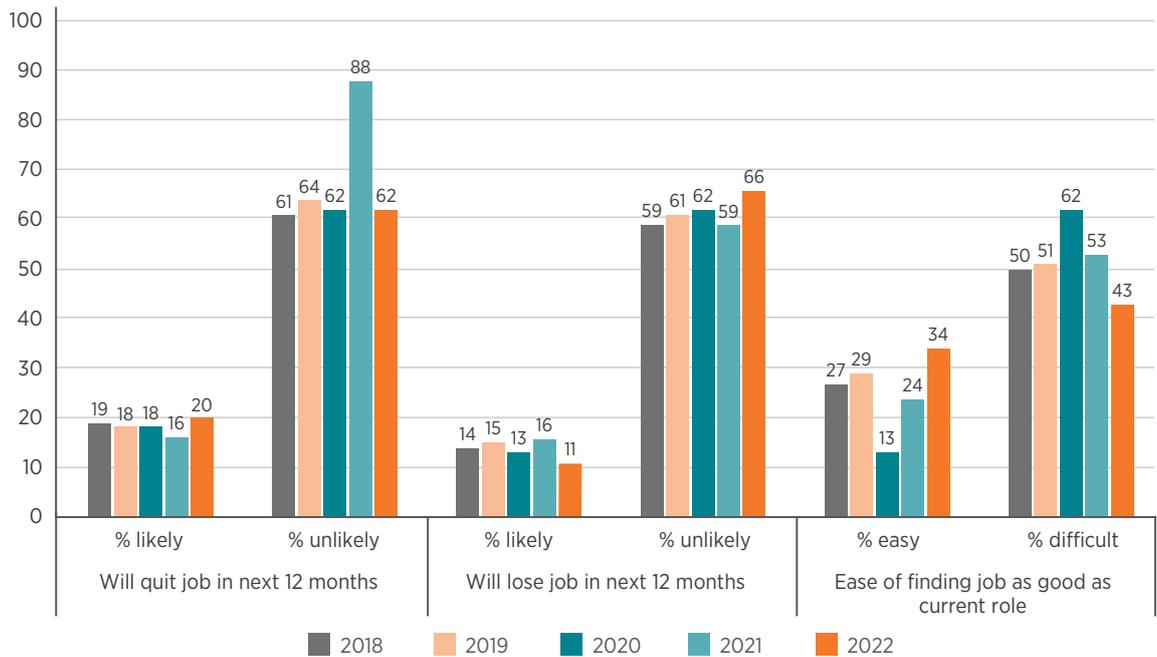
A similar story is reflected in workers' intentions to quit and perceptions of the labour market.

Twenty per cent of workers say it's likely they'll quit their job in the next 12 months, compared with 16% in 2021. However, this figure is very similar to employee intention to quit prior to the pandemic, with 18% or 19% of workers saying this in the previous CIPD Good Work Index findings.

<sup>1</sup> The 2020 Good Work Index data was collected in January 2020, prior to the pandemic.

In other words, any slight uplift in intention to leave is likely a sign of job moves returning to pre-pandemic levels rather than greater than usual labour market mobility. As Figure 2 shows, there was a significant rise in workers saying they were unlikely to leave their jobs in 2021, presumably due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and job insecurity. Although, there may be exceptions in particular industries where competition for skills is encouraging job moves.

**Figure 2: Worker views on leaving their role, job security and ease of finding comparable work elsewhere (%)**



Base: 2018: n=6,009; 2019: n=5,174; 2020: n= 6,128; 2021: n=5,680; 2022: n=6,291.

There is also a downward trend in workers thinking it's likely they'll lose their job in the next 12 months, and workers are more confident about being able to find comparable work than they were during the pandemic. This likely reflects increasing confidence that businesses are recovering after the pandemic, as well as the tight labour market, with unemployment in the UK at record lows.

However, not all workers feel they have this option. Thirty-nine per cent said they would find it difficult to leave their organisation, even if they wanted to, and 31% said they'd like to quit their job but have too few options to leave. People with caring responsibilities were particularly likely to say this, as were people in lower-paid roles.

### Employee attitudes to work

Part of the discourse around the great resignation has been the 'great rethink', and whether the pandemic has caused workers to re-evaluate the meaning and centrality of their work.

We don't find evidence that workers' attitudes to work have materially shifted. Just 5% of those saying they are looking to leave their job in the next 12 months said it was because of the COVID-19 pandemic prompting them to change their career path. Only 2% of those who have left their role in the last 12 months cited this as a reason.

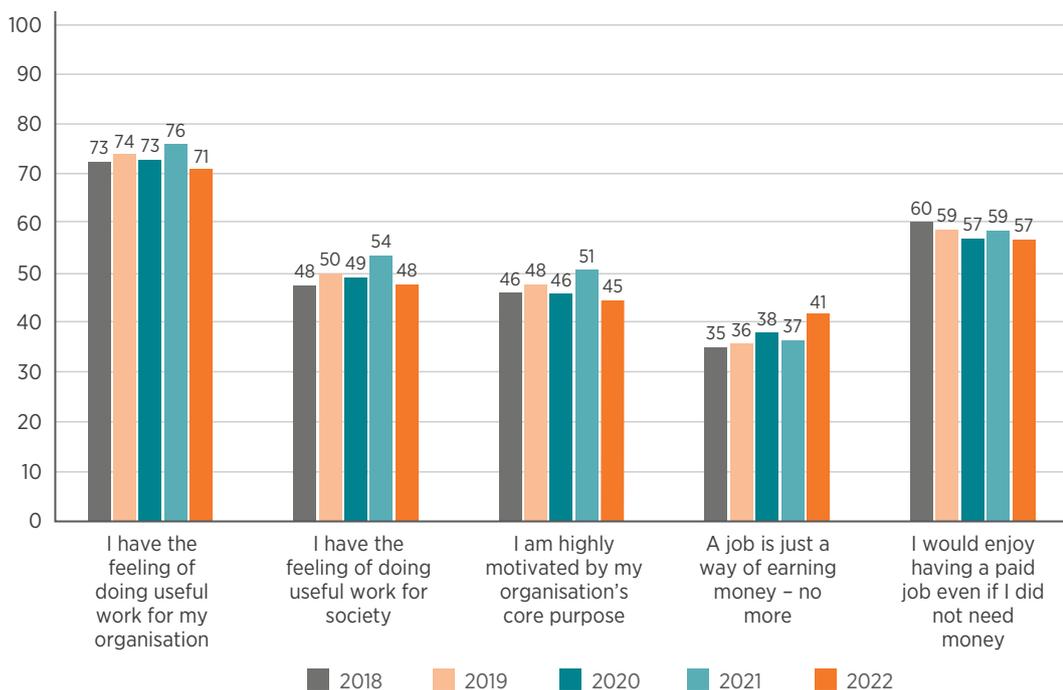
Of course, the pandemic could have prompted more subtle shifts in attitudes towards work.

We also looked at perceptions of work meaningfulness and work centrality, to identify whether workers have begun to re-evaluate the meaning work plays in their lives, and how meaningful their roles are. Meaningful work is an important aspect of our jobs. It is consistently related to outcomes including work engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, we did find that an increasing number of workers said they found meaning in their work. Seventy-six per cent agreed they were doing useful work for their organisation, 54% said they felt they did useful work for society, and 51% said they were motivated by their organisation’s purpose. Key workers were particularly likely to say they did meaningful work for society in 2021, with 68% agreeing with this statement (compared with 45% of non-key workers), reflecting the key role they played through the pandemic.

In 2022, however, the overall figures dropped to pre-pandemic levels, particularly around doing useful work for society. Just under half of workers in 2020 and 2022 said they did meaningful work for society, down from 54% during the pandemic. Key workers continued to feel that they do useful work for society in 2022 (60%), a drop since 2021 but still higher than non-key workers (40%).

**Figure 3: Meaningful work and job centrality (% agree)**



Base: 2018: n=4,850; 2019: n=4,874; 2020: n=6,136; 2021: n=5,826; 2022: n=5,927.

This temporary boost in work meaningfulness is likely due to key roles many workers undertook and the need for teams to come together to deliver in challenging circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> Allan, B.A., Batz-Barbarich, C., Sterling, H.M. and Tay, L. (2019) Outcomes of meaningful work: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Management Studies*. Vol 56, No 3. pp500–528.

Meaningful work is important, however. We find that workers who find less meaning are significantly more likely to want to leave their job.<sup>3</sup>

Work centrality (defined in the CIPD Good Work Index as whether someone would enjoy having a paid job, even if they did not need the money, and whether someone believes a job is just a way of earning money, nothing more) also appears to have marginally dropped in 2022. This difference is small, so we need more data to understand if this is a longer-term trend. However, it does appear that since 2018, there has been a small upward shift in workers believing a job is a way of earning money and nothing more. This might be an emerging sign of change, but it certainly doesn't suggest there has been a wholesale attitude shift towards work.

### Why are employees leaving roles?

The most common reasons workers cited as factors behind them wanting to leave their job in the next 12 months were:

- for better pay and benefits elsewhere (35%)
- to increase job satisfaction (27%)
- for better work–life balance (24%)
- to do a different type of work (23%).

While pay and benefits were clear pull factors for looking for another role, job satisfaction, a change of type of work, and better work–life balance were also important factors. The pandemic could have prompted workers to evaluate their roles and look for more satisfying or different types of work, with more work–life balance.

On the other hand, these factors have long been popular reasons for wanting to look for new work. We do not have directly comparable data from previous Good Work Index reports for pre-pandemic comparison, but previous CIPD research found that increasing job satisfaction, getting better pay and benefits and doing a different type of work were top factors in intention to leave, as was reducing stress.

In addition, 25% of respondents also said they had another reason for leaving their job, not listed in our survey response options, such as planning to retire or a job contract coming to an end.

Of course, intention to leave a role does not always translate into a resignation. We also asked workers why they left their last organisation. Most of the reasons were similar:

- better pay and benefits elsewhere (27%)
- unhappy with the leadership of senior management (21%)
- better work–life balance (20%)
- to do a different type of work (18%).

Seventeen per cent also said redundancy was why they left their last role. Interestingly, being unhappy with senior leadership appears to be a bigger factor in actual job moves than intention to quit. This was especially true for those who have left organisations in the last 12 months – 30% of those leaving in this timeframe said being unhappy with senior management was a key reason for leaving, perhaps reflecting the difficult decisions that some organisations needed to make through the pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> Ordinal probit regression (-2 Log Likelihood = 15080.95, Chi-square = 978.56, p-value = 0.000). Full results can be found in the Appendix of the full survey report.

## Outcomes of moving jobs

We also looked at whether moving jobs actually results in better pay and benefits, responsibility, fulfilment and work-life balance for those that had moved jobs in the past year. The answer is nuanced and reflects occupational and life-stage differences.

### Moving jobs: pay, responsibility and fulfilment

Around half of workers who've moved roles in the past 12 months have moved into a higher-paying role (53%). A quarter moved into a role with less pay (25%), and a similar amount into a role paying a comparable amount (22%). Workers in managerial and professional roles are more likely to have moved into a better-paying role than in lower occupational groups, suggesting that lower-paid workers find it difficult to move into higher-paying roles.

There's also a clear age component here, with younger workers tending to move into roles that are better paid (78% of workers 18–24 move into better-paid roles, for example, compared with 33% of workers 65 and over).

While 34% of workers have moved to a role with more responsibility, 25% moved to a role with less responsibility. Reflecting a similar pattern to pay, workers in managerial and professional roles are more likely to take on roles with more responsibility than workers in elementary occupations. There is still an age component here, but it is less pronounced than for pay: 36% of workers aged 18–24 moved to roles with more responsibility, compared with 27% of workers aged 65 and over. Thirty-six per cent in both age groups also moved into roles with less responsibility – potentially reflecting the labour market challenges faced by younger and older workers.

Overall, the data indicates that workers do tend to move into roles they find more fulfilling, with close to six in ten workers (58%) who have moved jobs in the last 12 months saying their new job is more fulfilling than their last. Again, workers in managerial and professional roles are more likely to say their new job is more fulfilling.

### Moving roles: work-life balance

Around half of workers (48%) who have moved jobs in the last 12 months report more work-life balance in their new role. Only 17% say their new role has less work-life balance. Managerial and professional workers are least likely to say their new job involves more work-life balance, as are younger age groups, with only 22% of workers aged 18–24 saying their new role has more work-life balance. On the flip side, 62% of workers over 65 say their role affords them more work-life balance.

In some part, this may reflect individual choice: older workers who are approaching retirement may accept lower pay for better work-life balance, although this is of course down to individual choice. Read the research [\*Understanding Older Workers\*](#) for insights and recommendations on supporting this group.

### Poorer mobility for lower earners

Overall, it appears that mobility into higher-paying roles with more responsibility (and presumably career progression) happens more frequently for those already in managerial or professional, and thereby higher-paying, roles, although there is a trade-off for work-life balance.

Workers in other, often lower-paid, occupations are less likely to move 'upwards' to roles with better pay, responsibility and fulfilment but are more likely to have better work-life balance.



Ensuring progression and skills development for those earning low wages is very important, as is ensuring all jobs are paid a fair wage. As the findings above show, for many workers in low-paid roles, finding a higher-paying job is not easy.

Thirty-eight per cent of low earners<sup>4</sup> say they have too few options to quit, despite wanting to, compared with 27% of higher earners. Lower earners also feel it is more likely that they will lose their jobs (17%, compared with 9% of high earners). Just 16% say they have strong bargaining power as an employee, compared with 38% of those in higher-paying jobs.

We should be concerned that moving into better-paying jobs appears more challenging for those already in lower-paid roles, especially in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. Our data shows that 29% of all respondents said they keep up with bills and commitments, but struggle from time to time, and 11% say although they keep up with their bills, it is a constant struggle for them to do so.

Unsurprisingly, workers on lower wages are far more likely to be struggling with bills. Nineteen per cent of those earning under £20,000 say keeping up with bills is a constant struggle. Twelve per cent of those earning between £20,000 and £39,999 also say this. Thirty-four per cent of workers earning under £20,000 say they are keeping up with bills, but it is a struggle from time to time. The same proportion of workers earning between £20,000 and £39,999 say this.

This data was collected before energy and fuel prices increased greatly in the UK, meaning these difficulties will only become more prevalent.

### The employer view

Ninety-six per cent of respondents in the CIPD's 2022 *Reward Management* survey believe employers have a responsibility to provide a fair and liveable income, and 87% believe employers should support in-work progression to increase earning potential. In the current context, there is a risk that in-work poverty becomes an even bigger issue, so employers need to do all they can to make work a more reliable route out of poverty.

The CIPD's [in-work poverty hub](#) provides recommendations for employers on the action they can take.

### Good work and intention to quit

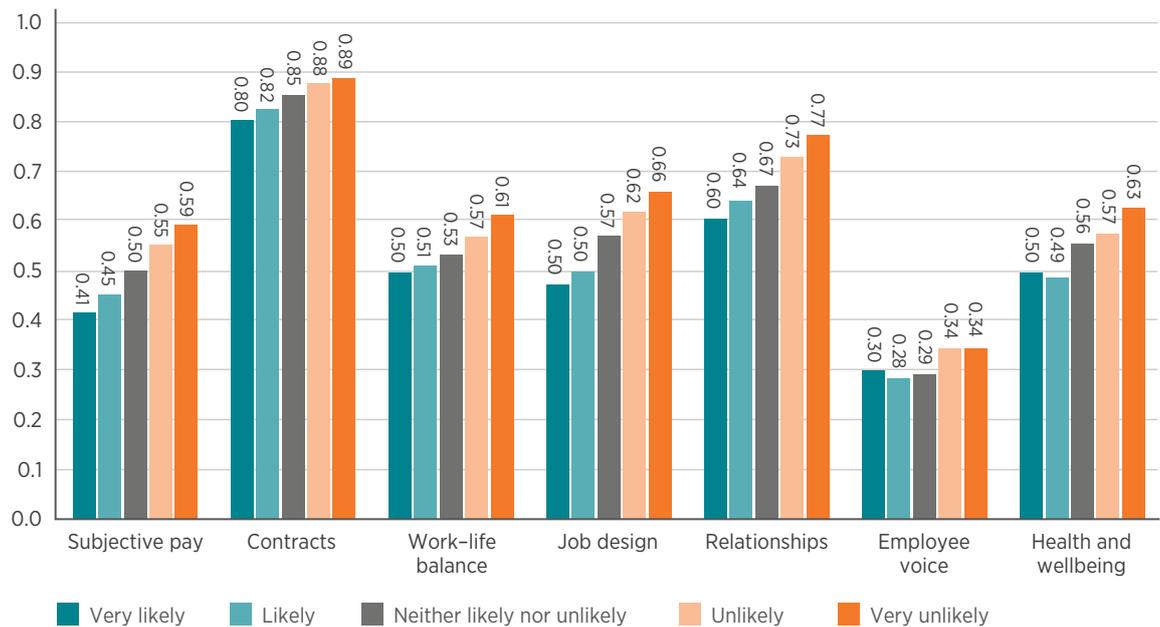
Employers looking to increase employee retention should focus on improving job quality in the areas of pay and benefits, work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Our analysis finds that job quality is highly correlated with intention to leave jobs. In fact, even when controlling for factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and occupation, we find that workers who have low scores across all areas of the Good Work Index are more likely to say they'll quit their jobs in the next 12 months. The only exception to this is employee voice, which isn't correlated with intention to leave.

Figure 4 demonstrates that, the lower workers score on dimensions of job quality, the higher likelihood they have of wanting to leave their job in the next 12 months. In other words, improving job quality is not only the right thing to do, but can aid employee retention.

<sup>4</sup> Lower earners defined as £20,000 or under, and higher earners as £60,000 and over.

Figure 4: Likelihood of moving jobs in the next 12 months and CIPD Good Work Index scores, 2022



Base: n=6,291.

### Recommendations for practice

While the CIPD Good Work Index 2022 finds little evidence of a ‘great resignation’ or ‘great rethink’, employers still need to think carefully about retention. With pay and benefits being a key driver of job moves, coupled with increased living costs, businesses need to think carefully about how they reward employees.

More generally, if businesses are concerned about retention, they should think about how they can improve job quality and foster positive working environments that aid retention.

People professionals should:

- ✓ **Use workforce data such as engagement surveys or employee focus groups to understand where job quality can be improved**, in their context, and for which groups of the workforce (that is, hybrid workers, those working on-site). For example, pay and benefits may be less of an issue in some organisations, but work-life balance may be challenging. While not all jobs will be good in all ways, data can highlight where changes need to be made.
- ✓ **Use data on turnover, by demographic**, to understand why workers are leaving, and identify where action can be taken to improve working conditions.
- ✓ **Proactively review pay and benefits packages** in light of the cost-of-living crisis. Where pay reviews are challenging, there are other steps that organisations can take to support workers, such as looking at their overall financial wellbeing offering and improving other employment practices. Find out more in our [in-work poverty hub](#).
- ✓ **Improve subjective aspects of work**, for example work meaningfulness. Our data shows that work meaningfulness increased during the pandemic. While working in crisis mode isn’t sustainable or desirable long term, lessons can be learned about how work can be done in a more purposeful way. Roadblocks like unnecessary bureaucracy and difficult processes can get in the way of getting things done. Read more about

how collaboration through the pandemic created a sense of purpose and effectiveness in our report: *Effective Cross-functional Collaboration in a Changing World of Work*.

- ✓ **Improve other important areas of job quality relevant to retention**, like work-life balance. We discuss further recommendations on the focused action that can be taken in the remainder of this report.

## 3 Shifts in good work: wellbeing and work-life balance

In the CIPD Good Work Index 2021, we identified a number of areas where job quality has shifted in recent years, due to changing ways of working and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating existing occupational inequalities. 2022 data confirms that these difficulties remain for many sections of the workforce.

### Work-life balance

In the CIPD Good Work Index 2021, we noted that work-life balance was already an issue in the UK prior to the pandemic, with many working more hours than they would like. Although we do find that there is a slight increase in the overall work-life balance index in 2021 and 2022 compared with pre-pandemic levels (driven by an increase in the availability of homeworking), this masks the different experiences of workers in different groups.

New ways of working have brought challenges. For example, hybrid workers have needed to navigate the boundaries between work and home life. Meanwhile, key workers<sup>5</sup> have been responding to the pandemic, with less of the flexible working arrangements afforded to non-key workers. These themes continue into 2022.

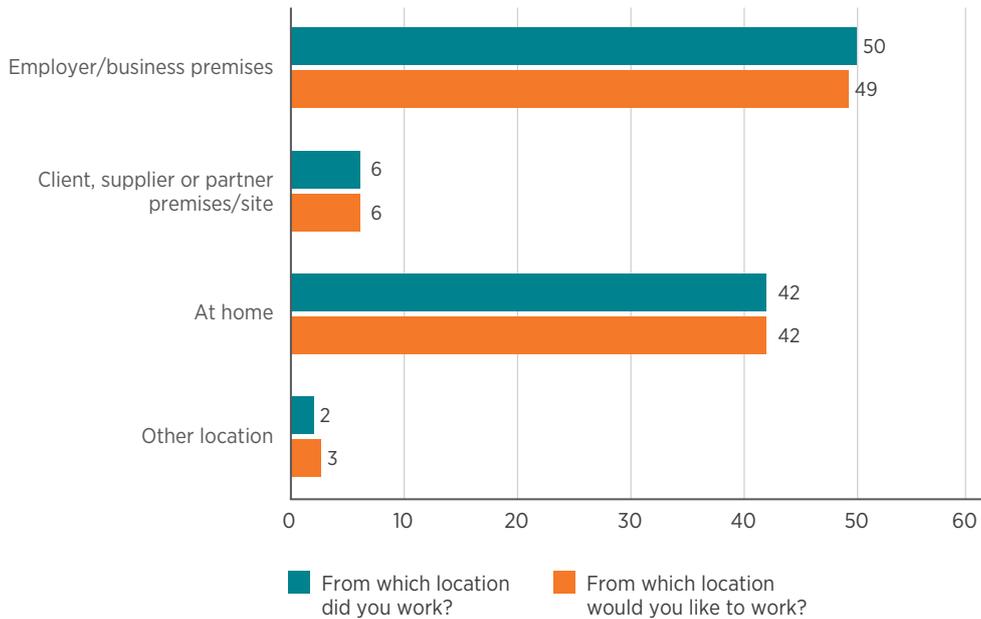
### Hybrid working and work-life balance

In this year's CIPD Good Work Index, we asked workers to indicate what proportion of their work time they spent at various locations. Figure 5 shows that 50% of work was done at an employer or business premises, 42% was done at home, 6% at a client, supplier or partner site, and around 2% was done at other locations (for instance, while 'on the move' or travelling). It also shows that this tallies well with what proportion of time workers would *like* to work at each location, suggesting that, on average, employees are largely happy with their working location.

Where people work is driven by the nature of their jobs. In general, managerial and professional occupations are more likely to work from home. Administrative and secretarial occupations are also more likely to work from home than workers in sales, process and elementary occupations.

<sup>5</sup> Respondents selected whether they were a key worker according to the UK government definition: 'A job role is essential and critical to the COVID-19 response and falls under one of the categories listed by the government. This includes health and social care, education and childcare, key public services, local and national government, food and other necessary goods, public safety and national security, transport and utilities, communication and financial services.'

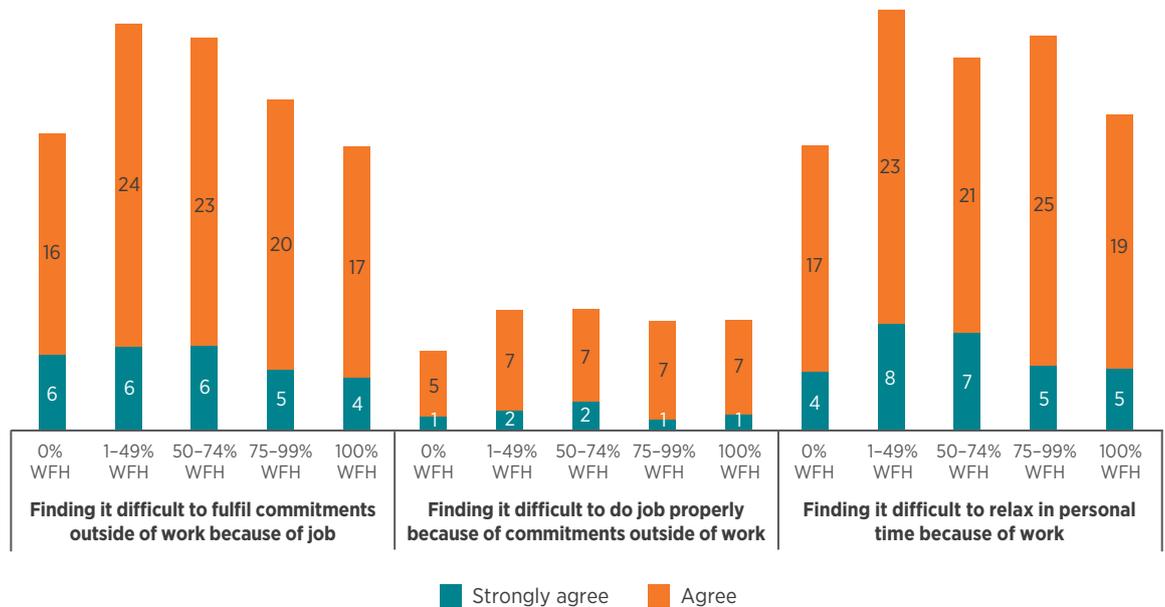
**Figure 5: Proportion of time at different work locations, 2022 (%)**



Base: n=6,291.

While in general those with hybrid working patterns tend to report higher levels of job quality compared with workers who report no time spent working from home (WFH), hybrid workers appear to face the biggest difficulties in balancing work and life, including work-life spillover and longer working hours than they'd prefer.

**Figure 6: Work-life balance and hybrid working arrangements (%)**



Base: n=6,291.

Those working in a hybrid arrangement tend to struggle most with fulfilling commitments outside of work because of their job. This is likely to be due to the nature of jobs that are done mostly at home, which tend to be in higher occupational groups that struggle with this aspect of work-life balance.

Those who never work from home and those who always work from home are the least likely to say they find it difficult to fulfil commitments outside of work because of their job. The latter group are likely to be in senior roles in organisations, be it business owners and/or the self-employed, meaning their experience of balancing work and life may look different from those in different types of roles.

There is a similar story when looking at who says it's difficult to relax in their personal time because of work. Hybrid workers tend to struggle with this more. Again, this is likely influenced by the type of roles that can be done from home, with technology meaning work can be picked up outside of working hours.

In general, though, hybrid working does not appear in itself to promote better balance between work and non-work commitments, and a blurring of boundaries between work and home may have made this more difficult.

### Key work and work-life balance

Unsurprisingly, many key workers can't work from home. They are also less likely to be able to use informal flexibility to manage responsibilities out of work, with 31% of key workers saying it would be difficult to take an hour or two off work to take care of a personal or family matter, compared with 15% of non-key workers.

However, there are other forms of flexibility organisations should consider to help this group manage their work-life balance, especially since 26% of key workers find it difficult to fulfil commitments outside their job because of the amount of time they spend on work.

### Demographic differences

We find evidence that work-life balance for women has been particularly impacted by the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, our data showed that women had slightly higher scores than men on the work-life balance index.

Their scores on this dipped in 2021 and 2022, so scores were comparable with men's. In fact, in 2022 their scores were marginally lower, which may reflect the increase in caring and domestic responsibilities women took on through the pandemic. It may be that women have held on to extra responsibilities even though pandemic restrictions have eased.

### Recommendations for practice

As we noted in the CIPD Good Work Index 2021 report, occupational differences in where work can be done, and who has access to flexible and hybrid working, deserves attention. Many organisations may find that some of their roles can be done in a hybrid way, where others can't.

This means employers need to think carefully about fairness, about where work can be done most productively, and how they allow workers who can't do their jobs from home to have flexibility in other ways.

Importantly, our data also highlights that many parts of the workforce struggle with work-life balance. Just over a quarter of workers (26%) say they struggle to relax in their personal time because of work. Time to recharge away from work is key for wellbeing, so employers should think holistically about how to support better work-life balance for their workers.

### People professionals should:

- ✓ **Be aware that hybrid working doesn't necessarily lead to better work-life balance.** In fact, it can make navigating the boundaries between work and life challenging, especially with increased technology use. Work with line managers and leaders to



role-model good practice and set the tone of how work-life boundaries are managed. Read the [CIPD guidance \*Effective Hybrid Working\*](#). And see the report and case studies, [An Update on Flexible and Hybrid Working Practices](#).

- ✓ **Think creatively about flexible working.** Flexibility looks different for individuals and businesses. Think about flexibility in work hours and patterns, not just location flexibility. See [CIPD examples of types of flexible working](#), [guides](#) and [case studies](#) on flexible working across different sectors.
- ✓ **Understand where work-life balance challenges lie in your business context.** There will be different risk factors for overwork and lacking work-life balance in different contexts. Technology may be creating an ‘always-on’ culture in one business, while long working hours and lack of informal flexibility might be challenging in another. Work with managers and employees to understand the state of play.
- ✓ **Look at other factors that influence work-life balance**, such as workload and caring responsibilities, and support line managers to work with their teams to ensure work is healthy and productive.

### Health and wellbeing at work

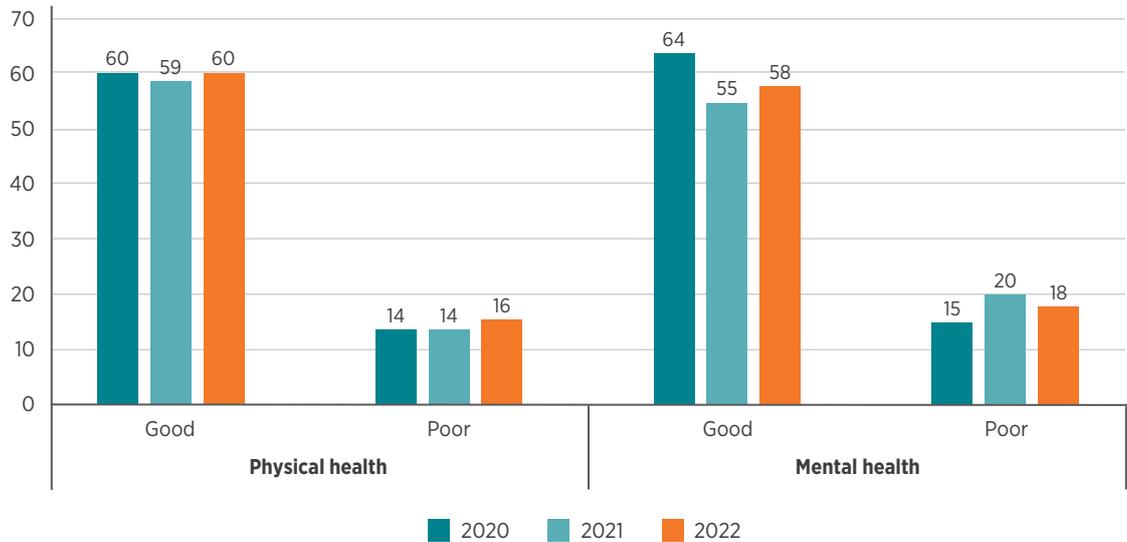
The COVID-19 pandemic caused health and wellbeing to rise up the corporate agenda. The 2021 CIPD [Health and Wellbeing](#) survey report and the [CIPD’s 2020 People Profession](#) survey found that wellbeing was a top priority for people professionals and business leaders. This was welcome, given the complex challenges brought about by the pandemic. Less positively, the [CIPD’s 2022 Health and Wellbeing at Work](#) survey suggests that wellbeing has started to slip slightly down the boardroom priority list.

It’s imperative that organisations still prioritise wellbeing and take a holistic approach to support people’s mental as well as physical health, not least because COVID-19 is clearly still an issue: 25% of workers said they’d had COVID-19 in the past year, and about 4% said they had long COVID. The CIPD’s 2022 [Health and Wellbeing at Work](#) survey showed that 46% of organisations had employees who had experienced long COVID in the past 12 months, and it’s the fifth main cause of long-term sickness absence. In addition, Good Work Index data has highlighted a downward trend in wellbeing, even before the pandemic began.

Figure 7 shows that workers’ general physical health has remained relatively stable since 2019, but mental health has fluctuated more noticeably, with 64% of workers saying their mental health was good prior to the pandemic, dropping to 55% in the midst of the pandemic. In 2022, 58% said their mental health was good. This is encouraging, but given that almost two in ten workers (18%) said their general mental health was poor, businesses should still be paying attention to this issue.



**Figure 7: Workers' general mental and physical health, 2020–22 (%)**



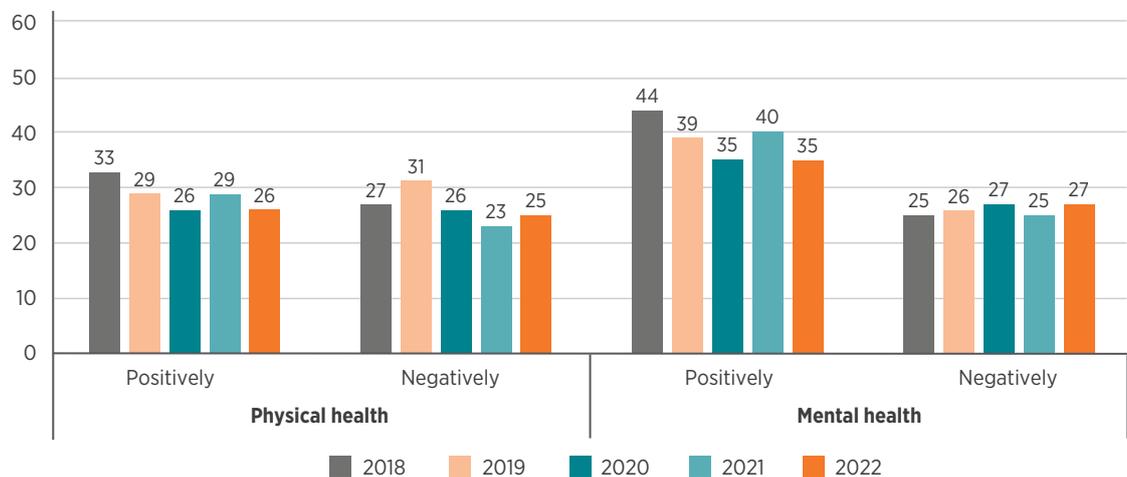
Base: 2020: n=6,509; 2021: n=6,120; 2022: n=6,107.

Work can and should be a positive influence on wellbeing. Again, we have noted a downward trend in the influence of work on wellbeing since the CIPD Good Work Index began in 2018. Between 2018 and 2020, the percentage of workers saying work positively impacted their physical health declined. In 2021, this figure increased slightly, but in 2022 returned to 2020 levels. A quarter of workers say work negatively impacts their physical health.

We see a similar trend for mental health. Thirty-five per cent of workers say work positively impacts their mental health, down from 44% in 2018. Again, there was a temporary uplift in 2021. Just over a quarter of workers say work has a negative impact on their mental health (27%).

The reason for the temporary uplift in 2021 was unclear; it could be due to changes in the sample in 2021, or that work was a source of structure and purpose during COVID-19 lockdowns. Either way, it appears that this was temporary.

**Figure 8: The impact of work on physical and mental health, 2018–22 (%)**



Base: 2018: n=6,009; 2019: n=5,174; 2020: n=6,509; 2021: n=6,120; 2022: n=6,107.



### Demographic differences in wellbeing

Workers experienced different challenges through the COVID-19 pandemic when it comes to wellbeing, and continue to do so. Organisations had to take a more individualised approach to wellbeing, and this approach should be continued. In this section we explore the wellbeing challenges faced by different groups to guide wellbeing strategy.

The first is gender. Overall, we find that the health and wellbeing index scores for men are higher (0.59) compared with women (0.55). This is in line with previous years; on average men have tended to score slightly higher than women on this index.

Notably, there are clear differences in experience of health problems between gender. Almost three-quarters of women in our sample (71%) said they'd experienced a non-physical health condition in the last year, such as anxiety, compared with 62% of men.

That being said, men were more likely than women to say that work was a contributing factor to their mental health issue – although many women also said that work was a factor (see Table 1). For example, for the 34% of men who said they have experienced anxiety in the past 12 months, 71% said work was a contributing factor.

When it comes to physical health, workers are most likely to say work was a contributing factor to backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems; six in ten workers said this.

**Table 1: Health problems experienced by UK workers in the past 12 months**

	% experienced in the past 12 months		% where work was a contributing factor		% who have discussed with their boss/ employer	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Anxiety	34	48*	71*	61	34	36
Panic attack(s)	8	14*	68*	51	39	31
Depression	26	26*	60*	51	39	34
Sleep problems	44	48*	58*	51	21	21
Backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems	44	51*	59	59	34	41*
Breathing problems	9	8	27*	13	35	36
Heart problems	5*	3	27	13	50	56
Hearing problems	8*	5	19	11	30	43
Road traffic accidents while commuting to or from work	1	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Injury due to an accident while at work	2	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Repetitive strain injury (RSI)	6	8*	89	95	25	39*
Skin problems	16	19*	34	30	14	16
COVID-19	25	24	19	23	64	69
Long COVID	4	3	17	30	39	56

Base: men: n=2,146; women: n=2,318.

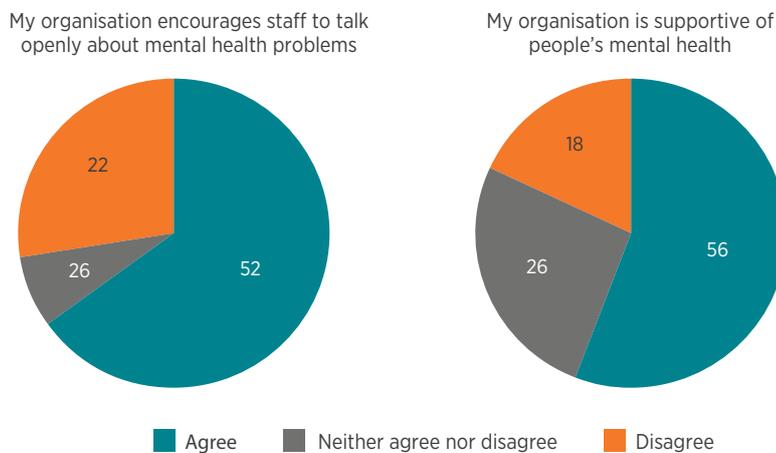
\* denotes the gender difference is statistically significant.

### Employee perceptions of wellbeing climate

Although many workers say that work has been a contributing factor to their health issue, there appears to be a disconnect between experience of a work-related health issue and discussing that issue at work. For example, 55% of respondents who have experienced depression in the past 12 months said work contributed, but only 36% discussed this with their boss or employer.

This is especially true for mental health issues, but it also appears to be the case for some physical health problems, notably repetitive strain injury and backache, or other bone, joint or muscle problems. Although, women are more likely to have discussed these issues at work than their male counterparts (see Table 1).

**Figure 9: Employee perceptions of wellbeing climate, 2022 (%)**



Base: n=5,337.

It's clear that many workers have struggled with health issues that their employer or boss may not be aware of, or at least not have had this formally disclosed to them. Organisations need to do more work to create a climate where employees feel they can talk about wellbeing, raise issues, or get the support they need.

That being said, six in ten employees think that their line manager, supervisor or boss is open and approachable on issues like mental health (62%), although this isn't consistent across occupations, with far fewer workers in process, plant and machine operative (48%) and elementary occupations (47%) agreeing with this. The CIPD's *2022 Health and Wellbeing at Work survey* showed low levels of confidence on the part of people professionals in the ability of line managers to support mental health – just 38% think line managers in their organisation are confident to have sensitive conversations and signpost staff to expert sources of help if needed, for example. While it's ultimately a worker's choice to disclose any health conditions, it's concerning that two in ten disagree that their organisation is supportive of mental health and encourages staff to talk openly about mental health problems.

### Key workers

Consistent with the findings from the CIPD Good Work Index 2021, we also observe lower mean scores among key workers (0.55) for the health and wellbeing index compared with non-key workers (0.59).

We didn't find that key workers were more likely to report a mental health condition than non-key workers, but they were significantly more likely to say that work was a contributing factor to mental health conditions they had experienced.

Part of this is likely to be exacerbated by work demands; 30% of key workers say they feel exhausted at work, and 27% say they feel under excessive pressure – significantly higher than non-key workers. This is likely influenced by workload, among other factors; four in ten key workers say their workload is too much, compared with three in ten non-key workers.

We also find that key workers are more likely to have physical health issues, although the overall proportions are still fairly small. For example, over half of key workers (53%) said they had experienced backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems in the past 12 months, and 64% said that work was a contributing factor.

### Presenteeism

Presenteeism appears to be on the rise since 2021 – almost half of workers (46%) say they've worked in recent months despite not feeling well enough to perform their duties, up from 35% in 2021. However, this is still lower than 2020 figures, where 54% said they worked despite being unwell.

Homeworking did not appear to be a factor in presenteeism. In fact, data suggests that those working from home none of the time were slightly more likely to say they worked when unwell than those who work from home 75% of the time or more.

Key workers were more likely to say they worked when not well enough than non-key workers (49% vs 44%). Lower-paid workers were also far more likely to say they worked when unwell (52%) compared with higher earners (38%),<sup>6</sup> which could reflect that lower-paid workers are unable to afford taking time off.

Workload was also a factor: 65% of those saying their workload was too much said they worked when unwell, compared with 36% of people who said their workload was about right, and 38% who said their workload was too little.

### Recommendations

There was a necessary focus on employee wellbeing during the pandemic. Our data shows that this focus needs to continue, not least because wellbeing was an issue prior to 2020.

People professionals should:

- ✓ **Prioritise both mental and physical health in their wellbeing strategy.** Many people have experienced mental health challenges during the pandemic, but these impacts will not necessarily end when the pandemic does. But organisations should also not forget physical health and ensure there are practices and resources in place to support wider physical health, as well as particular issues like RSI and musculoskeletal problems.
- ✓ **Identify the drivers of wellbeing in their context.** There are a variety of factors that influence wellbeing, including workload and work pressure. Tackling issues like presenteeism requires organisations to understand its root causes and carefully consider how they support workers to take time off when they are unwell – for example, ensuring there is cover in place to manage workload and having good-quality occupational sick pay provision.

<sup>6</sup> Lower earners are defined as earning £20,000 or lower, and higher earners are defined as earning £60,000 or more.

- ✓ **Take a personalised approach to wellbeing.** Health and wellbeing challenges are likely to differ across employee groups and at an individual level, whether this be demographic or occupational. Organisations should provide a variety of wellbeing support that provides support based on individual need.
- ✓ **Help managers support the health and wellbeing of their staff.** This could include training managers to have sensitive conversations about health when they are concerned about staff, signpost to expert help when needed and understand what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to help people manage the impact of their symptoms on work. More broadly, managers should manage staff workload to avoid excessive pressure, a large cause of ill health in the workplace.
- ✓ **Examine wider wellbeing climate in their context.** Our data shows workplaces could do more to encourage workers to disclose and discuss health issues, especially if work is a contributing factor to these issues. As well as creating an environment that is open on issues like wellbeing, it's important that workers feel safe to discuss these without it negatively impacting them.

## 4 Further actions to improve job quality

### Supporting line managers

We know that line managers have a key role to play in employees' experience at work. Good management can help create an empowering and positive work environment, where workers feel competent, have influence over their work and are able to develop.<sup>7</sup>

Our analysis also finds that line manager relationships are important influences of wellbeing and work-life balance, among other factors, even after controlling for occupation and demographics. We find a positive relationship between the quality of management across all areas of the CIPD Good Work Index, in particular the work-life balance index and the health and wellbeing index.

In other words, good-quality line management has a direct relationship with enhanced worker wellbeing and their work-life balance. We also find a correlation between line manager relationship and intention to quit; negative line manager relationships are linked with higher intention to quit.

Clearly, line managers play a key role in promoting better job quality and workplace experience, as well as retention.

How well equipped do managers feel in their role? Forty-one per cent of our sample line-manage staff as part of their job. Just over half of this group say they receive the training and information they need to manage well (53%), with a similar amount saying they have the time they need to manage their staff well (51%). In other words, close to a quarter of managers say they don't receive the training they need (20%), or have the time (21%), to manage staff well.

<sup>7</sup> Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, Schermuly and Meyer, 2016, Syrek et al, 2013.

Positively, the majority of employees feel that their line manager, supervisor or boss:

- gives them respect (77%)
- recognises them when they do a good job (70%)
- provide support should they encounter a problem (74%)
- treats them fairly (77%).

Employees are generally less positive about the career and developmental support that they receive from their manager:

- A little over half of employees agree that their line manager, supervisor or boss provides useful feedback on work (55%).
- 57% agree they support their learning and development.
- Just under half feel their manager supports their longer-term career progression (48%).

In summary, key development areas for line managers include improving the quality and quantity of feedback employees receive, as well as encouraging them to support learning and development, with a focus on longer-term development. They need the self-awareness and understanding of their role in supporting employees' health and wellbeing, and the training and time to put this into practice.

### **Improving career development and progression**

Career development requires support from managers as well as the right organisation systems in place to encourage development and promotion opportunities. Earlier in the report, we note that providing career progression and development opportunities is an important way for employers to support employee mobility into better-paying roles. Development is also an aspect of job quality. In the CIPD Good Work Index 2022, we asked workers about their career progression.

Less than half of workers say their career progression to date has met their expectations (43%), and only one in ten say their career expectations have been exceeded. A further quarter of workers (24%) feel their career progression has not met their expectations, signalling that organisations need to do more to promote career development. It's also important to note that a quarter (24%) of workers do not have career progression expectations. However, this should not dissuade employers from ensuring development opportunities are available.

We also asked workers about the factors that have helped or hindered their career.

For those whose career progressions haven't met expectations, the top three perceived barriers to progression were:

- lack of career pathways (44%)
- poor-quality line management (37%)
- lack of opportunities to develop new skills (34%).

A similar theme is true for workers whose career has met their expectations. The following factors are seen as enablers of career progression:

- opportunities to develop new skills (36%)
- good-quality line management (36%)
- organisation they work/have worked for encouraging progression and promotion from within (30%).



Our data reinforces that lack of career pathways, manager support and lack of skills development are holding people back from career development. This is especially true for lower-paid workers. Indeed, many workers struggle to move out of lower-paid roles, a well-documented issue:<sup>8</sup>

- Lower earners are most likely to say they don't have career progression expectations (35%), but are also more likely to say their career has failed to meet their expectations (26%) than high earners (15%).
- 25% of lower earners say their job offers good career advancement prospects, compared with 51% of higher earners.
- 39% of lower earners say their job offers good skill development opportunities, compared with 72% of higher earners.

### Recommendations

Line managers have a huge influence on workers' experiences, and thereby their job quality. Managers are increasingly called upon to enact people management practices, but often do not have the time or training to carry out this key role well. People professionals should review how well equipped line managers are in their organisation:

- ✓ **Review manager job design:** Our data shows that managers are often squeezed, with 21% not having enough time to manage their staff well. Line manager and people professional collaboration is key for people practices to be enacted effectively, so organisations serious about improving job quality and employee experience should think carefully about line managers' time and resources.
- ✓ **Upskill managers:** Only 53% of managers said they have the training and information they need to manage their staff well. Our data shows that from the employee perspective, managers need more support on career development and giving good-quality feedback. The [CIPD line manager topic page](#) includes supporting materials and tools for line manager development.
- ✓ **Review career pathways:** In smaller businesses, or organisations with flatter structures, think creatively about what career development can look like. This can include lateral moves to develop new skills, for example.
- ✓ **Think creatively about long-term career development:** Supporting long-term development can be challenging, especially when workers and managers are often focused on short-term development needs and projects. However, it benefits businesses and workers to think longer term. The skills workers need can change rapidly, and with many businesses struggling to fill vacancies, thinking about internal upskilling and progression is beneficial.
- ✓ **Don't neglect skills development for lower-paid workers:** Our data shows that only 35% of low earners say their role provides good opportunities to develop their skills.

<sup>8</sup> Analysis by the Living Wage Foundation and New Economics Foundation, available at: [www.livingwage.org.uk/news/news-over-5-million-workers-insecure-low-paid-work](http://www.livingwage.org.uk/news/news-over-5-million-workers-insecure-low-paid-work)

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